

RHINONCUS ALBICINCTUS GYLL. (COL.: CURCULIONIDAE) IN SOUTH-EAST LONDON, A THIRD BRITISH LOCALITY

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AS PART of a biological survey of Beckenham Place Park, in the borough of Lewisham, south-east London (VC16, West Kent), I visited the area on 24.v.1995 to examine a small pond. Much of the park is given over to a golf course, and the pond sits between one of the greens, a car park and the narrow boundary woodland abutting houses and flats. It is surrounded by a high chain-link fence with thick hawthorn hedge and is overshadowed by a large oak and many other trees. The narrow banks between hedge and water are overgrown with bramble and other shrubs and emergent vegetation is limited to a small area of woody nightshade and yellow flag in a few places. I was therefore more than a little surprised to discover that along with numerous specimens of the common waterside weevil *Poophagus sisymbrii* (F.) I had swept a single specimen of the enigmatic *Rhinoncus albicinctus* Gyll.

R. albicinctus is associated with the amphibious bistort *Persicaria amphibia* (L.) Gray (Formerly *Polygonum*) in its aquatic form *natans* (Morris, 1976), but as far as I could remember at the time, this plant had not been present in the pond. A return visit on 19.vi.1995 failed to find either the plant or further specimens of the weevil, although the *Poophagus* was still found commonly by sweeping the meagre vegetation.

After ascertaining the whereabouts of some *Persicaria* in the Park, a further return visit was made on 27.vi.1995. Sure enough small patches of the foodplant were growing along the banks of the River Ravensbourne, about 1km east of the pond. However, these were all of the upright terrestrial growth form and they produced only a couple of specimens of the common *Rhinoncus pericarpus* (L.).

Rhinoncus albicinctus was first recorded as British from a small site on the banks of Virginia Water, Berkshire, where it was found in 1972 (Allen, 1974). However, the weevil has subsequently been discovered at the Powdermill Reservoir between Brede and Seddlescombe in East Sussex (Hodge, 1992). This large lake contained plenty of *P. amphibia* f. *natans* during 1992, but by 1994 the water level had dropped several metres and the exposed mudflats were covered in a blanket of the non-aquatic form of the plant. Nevertheless the weevil was still present and a single example was swept from this now exposed site on 23.viii.1994 (Jones, 1995). It is obviously breeding successfully in its Sussex locality, and although only a singleton could be found in Beckenham Place Park, its breeding status is suggested by the fact that the lone specimen was slightly teneral.

In both the insect red data book (Morris, 1987) and the recent review of scarce Coleoptera (Hyman & Parsons, 1992), *R. albicinctus* was accorded

red data book (RDB) status 1, "endangered", on the grounds that it was then known from just the single Berkshire locality. With its discovery at yet another site, it is possible that the beetle's status needs to be re-examined. It is intrinsic, albeit ironic, that with every new discovery a rare insect becomes less rare, and it is debatable whether an RDB1 species found in two new widely separated localities suggests a revised status of RDB2 "vulnerable" or RDB3 "rare". It is also possible that the weevil is, in fact, a newcomer to the British fauna and is now only beginning to spread; in which case it would not qualify for even "notable" status! Having said this, the foodplant, *Persicaria amphibia*, is common and widespread and were the weevil a true immigrant it is likely that it would have been discovered elsewhere before now. Only a retrospective analysis in, say, ten to twenty-five years, will illuminate the issue.

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References

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A sighting of *Nymphalis antiopa* L. (Lep.: Nymphalidae) in Kent

Walking with a friend and her dogs at Ide Hill, Kent, on 2.viii.95, my attention was caught by a large yet unfamiliar butterfly. This turned out to be a fine example of *Nymphalis antiopa* L. (Camberwell Beauty). It approached from the south and was visible for around ten seconds, before vanishing into the birch saplings that are now colonising the open ground left by the 1987 hurricane.— R.W. BOGUE, Kingston House, Tuckermarsh, Bere Alston, Devon PL20 7HB.